

BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMME

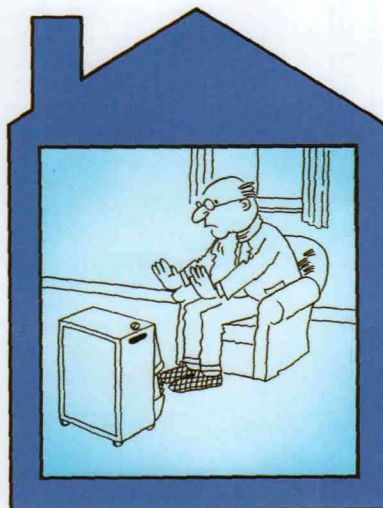
Energy Consumption Guide

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A councillor's guide to affordable warmth for tenants

DEPRIVATION

Many tenants on low incomes live in poorly insulated houses with inadequate means of heating. They spend a higher than average proportion of their income on heating and they still cannot keep warm. Cold, damp and mould undermine their health and the fabric of their houses deteriorates through condensation.



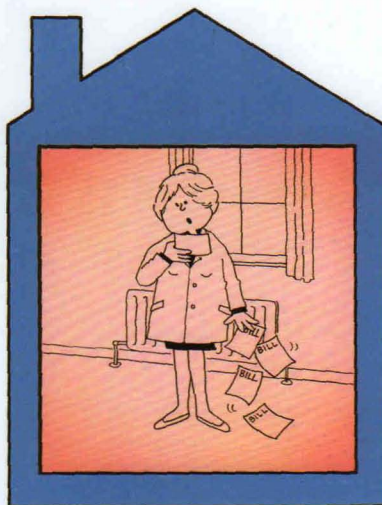
ENERGY

EFFICIENCY IN

DWELLINGS

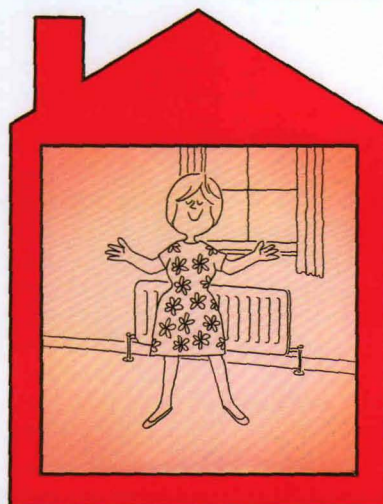
DESPERATION

Give a more efficient heating system to a family on a low income and they may not be able to afford to use it. They must choose — either they keep the heating switched off for much of the time or else they run up debts and risk disconnection. A good heating system on its own is not enough.



INSULATION

Provide a good level of insulation as well as an efficient heating system. The insulation should be at a level which makes it possible to keep warm without having to pay more than a low income family can afford.



Energy Efficiency Office
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DEPRIVATION — some of the facts

The diagram below shows how much on average low income families spend on heating, lighting, hot water and cooking. About half of the fuel expenditure is on heating.

Spending on fuel represents a high proportion of low income budgets, the average is over 13% in the case of people living alone and single parent families, and 10% on average for other low income groups. In contrast, the average for a middle income family is only 6%.








About 60% of local authority tenants live on a low income and over half of these are pensioners (low income being defined as households who are dependent on the State for 75% or more of their income).

INSULATION — why is it so important?

The right hand diagram gives examples of the amount that needs to be spent to keep a house warm, and what a typical family on a low income might afford. It can be seen that what they can afford is insufficient unless the house has both insulation and an efficient heating system.

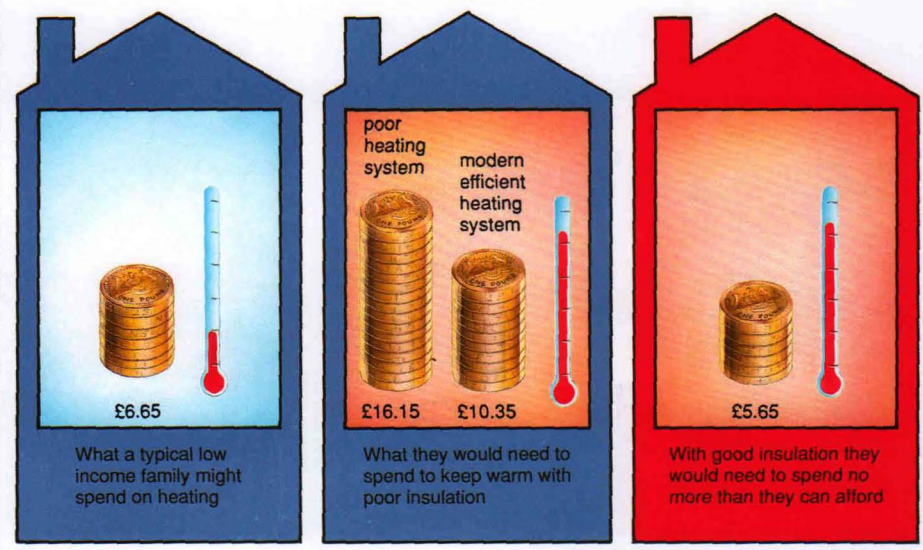
Quite apart from the misery and deprivation which tenants may suffer, there are other direct consequences for the local authority itself:

- physical deterioration of their housing stock due to condensation and mould growth
- increased expenditure on maintenance and redecoration
- increased voids and rent arrears
- compensation claims by tenants for possessions ruined by damp and mould
- the ability of tenants to take their landlord to court under section 99 of the 1936 Public Health Act
- general tenant dissatisfaction leading to higher administrative costs and lower staff morale

Single person families		
	pensioners	£6.84
	non-pensioners	£7.07
Other families without children		
	pensioners	£9.18
	non-pensioners	£9.96
Families with children		
	single parent and child	£9.43
	single parent and children	£11.50
	others with children	£11.93
Average weekly spending on fuel and power by low income council tenants (from 1988 Family Expenditure Survey)		

Keeping warm and how much it costs

Costs are average weekly costs of heating during a 30 week heating season for a pensioner couple



Fuel is wasted heating poorly insulated houses. This leads to higher emission levels into the environment of unfriendly gases, such as carbon dioxide, which accelerate the greenhouse effect.

STRATEGY AND ORGANISATION

An affordable warmth policy will need the will and commitment of Councillors to maintain momentum and ensure success. Has your Council adopted the following policies?

- 1 Make someone responsible for promoting affordable heating for tenants, setting priorities and training staff in energy awareness. This may perhaps involve coordinating policies in several departments — Housing, Technical Services and (for some councils) Social Services.
- 2 Make an appraisal of your housing stock to establish which are the most expensive to heat (this can sometimes be done as part of a general Housing Stock Condition Survey).
- 3 Set heating cost targets for different types of accommodation, so that they are within the reach of families on low incomes.
- 4 Develop a strategy and assign priorities for bringing all the housing stock within the heating cost targets.

Some local authorities have already implemented an 'affordable warmth' policy and found that it works. The Housing Director for Braintree says, "We have a programme aimed at improving the heating and insulation of all but our most modern properties. Over 10 years, 80% of our stock will be improved. In the first year, 900 homes have benefitted from this policy and feedback from tenants is very positive.

A well developed strategy should allow more efficient use of resources and give an increased sense of direction and morale amongst staff.

With an organised plan for expenditure on energy efficiency, it may be possible to take advantage quickly of any funds which might become available, say at the end of a financial year ('slippage' money).

RESOURCES AND FUNDING

Firstly, if an investment is manifestly cost effective, it ought to be made a high priority. Here are two ways that affordable warmth can be cost effective:

Offset insulation costs by using a less expensive heating system

For many post-war houses, the cost of an insulation package (loft and cavity insulation and draughtstripping costing perhaps as little as £250) can be more than offset by installing a less expensive heating system, eg gas fires and convector in place of boiler and radiators (typical saving £500-£600). This is a very attractive package.

Offset capital cost of insulation by future savings in revenue

In one scheme involving three tower blocks that suffered from persistent condensation and mould growth, it was calculated that the sum of the savings on maintenance costs plus the income from flats that were otherwise unlettable, would pay twice over for the capital cost of the insulation itself. What is more, the figures were accepted by the DoE to justify the insulation work.

Secondly, there are a number of sources of funding which are worth investigating:

- Estate Action (EA) — on run-down estates — EA has supported over 100 'Affordable Heat' schemes that improve heating and insulation together.
- Community Insulation Schemes — Neighbourhood Energy Action (NEA) and similar organisations have installed draughtproofing and loft insulation to the homes of thousands of low income families. Check if they operate in your area, if not invite them in.
- Increases in rent — the cost of insulation, like other improvement work, will usually involve an increase in rent. Discuss priorities with tenants when estates are being modernised.
- Partnerships with the voluntary sector.